



AFRICA/DR CONGO - Canonical sanctions have been announced for the priest President of INEC

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - The Congolese Bishops have launched a new appeal for the release of the three Assumptionist priests kidnapped in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in a message published at the end of their Plenary Assembly.

"We recalled the tragic situation of the Assumptionist priests, Jean-Pierre Ndulani, Anselme Wasikundi and Edmond Bamutupe and many other compatriots kidnapped in the Diocese of Butembo-Beni," reads the message. Bishops call on the government to "take hold of this situation in order to identify the kidnappers, find and free the hostages." A crisis committee needs to be created in charge of handling the situation "until the release of all our compatriots kidnapped" and to involve the UN Mission in Congo (MONUSCO). This is because "in accordance with its mandate to ensure the protection of the civilian population and taking into account the means at its disposal, the Bishops remain convinced that MONUSCO is able to contribute effectively to their release." The three religious were kidnapped on October 19 and since then there has been no news about their fate (see Fides 22/10/2012 and 22/01/2013).

The statement from the Congolese Bishops Conference also reports that don Apollinaire Malumalu was removed from the office as Director of the Pan-African Cardinal Martino and announces canonical sanctions against him on behalf of his Bishop.

"The case of Father Apollinaire Malumalu, a priest of the Diocese of Butembo-Beni, who chose to work within the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will be taken in charge by his bishop who will apply canonical sanctions against him." Don Apollinaire Malumalu was elected President of INEC by the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament on June 7th, despite the fact that, in an earlier statement, the Bishops had reiterated the prohibition to priests, religious men and women to "participate actively in the political field and associations of a political nature, as well as the management of state institutions, at all levels, responsible for organizing the elections" (see Fides 08/06/2013).

In their message, finally, the Bishops, thanked the government for the help given to the organization of the Plenary Assembly of the Association of the Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa (ACEAC), to be held in Kinshasa from 2 to 3 July. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 02/07/2013)